

MST FAMILY MEMBER PERSPECTIVE: "IT'S THE ENCOURAGEMENT THAT HELPS THE MOST"

The number one thing I thought was different with this treatment is that you weren't judgmental, and you didn't take sides. You didn't focus just on me or on Alison; you focused on the family. In other counseling they would just focus on the kids and I didn't get any help out of it in how to parent. They made me feel like I was a bad person. They would blame me for everything, but they wouldn't show me how to correct it. Parents need to know how to discipline their kids instead of doing things the wrong way like I was doing it. You came into my home, saw what I was doing, and showed me a different way that worked better. You taught me to discipline my kids as teenagers, not as little children.

I could call you or whoever was on call anytime I wanted. I called you for everything: my problems, the kids' problems, and problems with my husband—and you were willing to listen. You were a support not just for the children but for everything. When I was out of control saying, "I'm done. I'm done. I'm done," or the kids were out of control, I would call you. You'd calm me down first, then we would talk about the situation—how to handle it and what to say. You'd guide me on what to say while we were on the phone together. Then what really worked—you used to tell me, "Good job." You made me feel proud of myself and how I handled the situation. You didn't rush through it, like some counselors do. I think you like your job and you're not just here for the paycheck.

You've seen Alison—her lying, not coming home, and she and her sister throwing a big fit. You've seen me at my worst, but you kept me in check and I appreciated that. If you weren't in the house you wouldn't have seen the things that led to fights. What helped, too, is that you took time to make a list of all the free activities that were available in town for us to do as a family and even took the time to go with us to see how we interacted in places like that.

You ate my food when you didn't even know me—I thought that if you were willing to eat my food, I could trust you. You were always willing to go to probation meetings and to court and sit with us. You always told them how good Alison and I were when we were doing good. I think it's the encouragement that helps the most.

I remember one time you stayed four hours to calm us down. You made sure there wasn't going to be a fight after you left the house. And when you were not available, the therapist on call was very helpful. I knew I could count on her, too, because you all work as a team. I knew all the therapists meet in a group to discuss our situation and you've told me that you get together and brainstorm how you can help us. Just like they say, it takes a village to raise a kid. It takes a bunch of therapists to raise a kid, not just one.

-Melissa